

PRESENTATION OF THE PORTRAIT

OF

HON. WILLIAM T. DORTCH

TO THE

SUPREME COURT OF NORTH CAROLINA

BY

HON. H. G. CONNOR

23 MAY, 1916

---

Judge CONNOR said:

*May it please Your Honors:* Edmund Burke gave expression to a profound and very practical truth when he declared that "A people will not look forward to posterity who do not look backward to ancestry." As of all human virtues, pride of ancestry becomes a vice—using the word in its correct sense—an element of weakness, enervating character, when made the basis of claim to consideration in the absence of those qualities which have marked a strong, honorable ancestry. When, however, as said by one of North Carolina's wisest and best, who illustrated in his own life and character the truth which he so clearly expressed, "pride of ancestry inspires the exercise of the noblest patriotism, not prompting to empty boasting, but quickening every generous impulse and stirring the purest ambition," it should be stimulated and strengthened, because thereby is preserved and projected into our social and civic life the strongest and most permanent incentive to high endeavor and noble living. The presentation to the State of memorials of citizens who, in public and private station, have rendered service, or illustrated high and noble qualities, we take as an evidence of that generous and ennobling pride of ancestry described by Mr. Davis. Prompted by these sentiments, the children and grandchildren of William T. Dortch have extended to me the privilege of presenting to the Court, with the request that it be appropriately placed in this building, the portrait of their honored ancestor. With the permission of your Honors, I desire to ask your consideration of some thoughts concerning the life and character, the service and example, of this man, honored in his day and generation, whose memory we would perpetuate and whose example we would commend to the present and future generations of North Carolinians. When measured by the standards which, with us, have fixed the position of men, their work and influence among us, he is worthy a place with those whose portraits are placed on the walls of this building erected by the people for the purpose to which it has been dedicated.

William Theophilus Dortch, son of William Dortch and his wife, Drusilla, was born on his father's plantation, situate in Nash County, about 5 miles from the town of Rocky Mount, 3 August, 1824. Surrounded by, and living under, the conditions, existing at that time,